

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK;

OR, THE

THREE WISHES.

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE PEACOCK AT HOME"

A NEW EDITION



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR M. J. GODWIN,

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1809.

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PREFACE.

THE following Tale is principally taken from the admirable Work of Madame de Beaumont (*Le Magazin des Enfans*), which formed almost the whole library and the delight of the children of the last generation, and has hardly been surpassed by the many excellent productions which supply the nurseries and school-rooms of the present.

The story is there told with the simplicity and sprightliness of which the French language is so peculiarly capable, but which a literal translation would render not only insipid but vulgar.

In a poetical dress it may possibly give to the young reader a part of that amusement, which it once afforded the infancy of the author.



THE
THREE WISHES.

THE sun withdrew his last pale ray,
And clos'd the short and cheerless day ;
Loud blew the wind, and rain and sleet
Against the cottage casement beat.

The busy housewife trimm'd her fire,
And drew the oaken settle nigher,

And welcom'd home her own good man
To his clean hearth, his pipe, and can ;
For Homespun and his bustling wife
Were honest folks in humble life,
Who liv'd contented with their lot,
And lov'd the comforts of their cot.
With willing hand and chearful heart,
Each of life's burden bore their part,
With patience all its ills withstood,
And thankfully receiv'd the good.

Yet, they were not without their failings :
They lov'd the harvest-home regalings ;
On summer evenings on the green
At cricket oft was Homespun seen ;
And sometimes, where the sign ensnares
The wearied swain to drown his cares,
He lov'd to quaff the foaming ale,
And listen to a merry tale.

Was there within ten miles a fair—
He and his dame were surely there :

For she too lov'd, in trim array,

And scarlet cloak, a holiday.

Ah! then within her pocket burn'd

The long sav'd crown so hardly earn'd,

While in the stall temptation spread

The printed gown or top-knot red ;

Nor did her little happy train

For drum or whistle sue in vain.

Will Rigour's brow relentless lour,

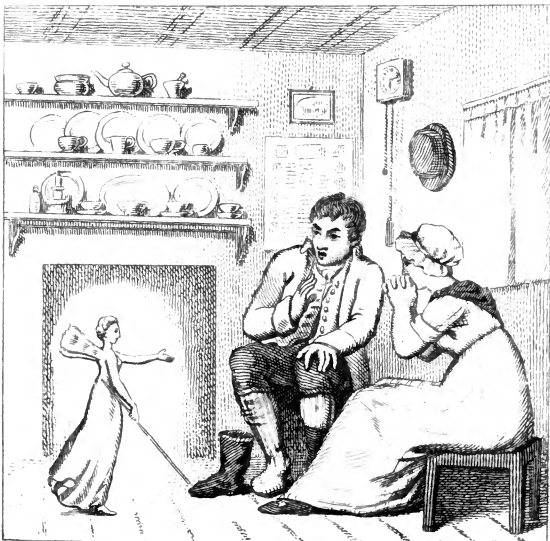
If pleasure steal from toil *one* hour ?

And shall the poor enjoy no ray
Of sunshine through their winter's day ?
Nor pluck the few wild flowers, that bloom
'Midst poverty's ungenial gloom ?

Now, seated in his wicker chair,
The swain enjoys his homely fare :
His rosy children round him press,
Eager to share the fond caress ;
And as his eyes delighted trace
Health and content in each dear face,

He scarce desires a happier lot,
His toils unfelt, his cares forgot.

When supper ended,—grace was said,
The babes were bless'd, and sent to bed,
And o'er the fire the parents sat,
Engag'd in sober, social chat,—
When suddenly a flash of light
Reveal'd to their astonish'd sight
A little form of lovely mien,
Epitome of Beauty's Queen.



Her zone was clasp'd with jewels rare,
And roses bound her auburn hair,
White was her robe, and in her hand
Graceful she wav'd an ivory wand.

Our couple started with surprise,
And star'd at her—with all their eyes,
Not guessing how or whence she came,
What was her nature, or her name.
At length their unexpected guest
The trembling villagers address'd :

Mortals ! she said, in me behold
A being of no earthly mold :—
But fear me not ; I visit earth
To benefit your humble worth ;
For this I've left the blissful land,
Rul'd by Imperial Oberon's hand,
And on your cottage I intrude
To pay a debt of gratitude.
For know, my friends, that every year
I'm doom'd a mortal form to wear,

And for a time must undergo
The sufferings earthly creatures know.
Sometimes I wing my way a bird ;
Sometimes with beasts compell'd to herd ;
A fish I plunge beneath the deep ;
Or in an insect's form I creep.
Of late it was my fate to wear
The semblance of the timid hare ;
And one cold morning in December
(The luckless day you may remember),

When winter stern in icy chains
Had bound the desolated plains,
And wither'd every tender plant,
A hare, compell'd by urgent want,
Ventur'd within your garden pale
To taste your parsley and your kale.
Soon of her steps you saw the trace,
And whistled Fury to the chace.
The fatal scent her track reveals,
And the fierce cur pursued her heels ;





Vain was her speed ! her failing breath
Left her within the jaws of death,
When doubling quick, thus sorely prest,
She sprang for shelter to your breast.
That breast, awake to pity's plea,
My kind protector ! rescued me :
Your generous cares assuag'd my pangs,
And sav'd me from the terrier's fangs.
'Twas then I vow'd, the very hour
That gave me back my form and power,

To seek your humble roof with speed,
And recompense the gentle deed.

Now, by the honour of a Spright
Who in good actions takes delight,
By Mab, the sovereign of fays,
Who sports beneath the moon's pale rays,
I grant to you and your good dame
The first Three Wishes that you name!
Think what will best your state amend,
And claim it from your grateful friend!

Together you had best advise,
And as you are *humane*, be *wise* !
For should you foolishly decide,
By your own choice you must abide ;
Nor further does my power extend,
Howe'er dispos'd to be your friend.

So saying, the benignant fay
Quick thro' the key-hole whisk'd away.

Our cottagers from fear reliev'd,
Scarcely their eyes and ears believ'd :

But ah ! what passions, long suppress'd,
Were rous'd in each unguarded breast ;
Ambition, that had dormant lain,
And Pride, with Luxury in his train ;
While Vanity perform'd her part
In simple Susan's easy heart !

Suppose the joy that now abounded,
The exclamations that resounded :
How strange ! what luck ! what can have brought it ?
Good lack ! Dear me ! Who would have thought it ?

What shall we wish for ? let us ponder.
Lord, how the neighbours will all wonder !

Quoth Homespun—if 'tis not a dream,
I'll have a farm, and keep a team.

A farm ! said Susan : on my life,
I'll be no farmer's dowdy wife,
To toil and drudge thro' mud and mire :
I hope you'll hold your head much higher.
Well, well, then—shall I be a Squire?—

Methinks I should be somewhat proud,
To own the land which once I plough'd.
With money plenty in my bags,
I'd keep my gig and brace of nags ;
My cellars should be duly stor'd,
And beef should smoke upon my board :
Besides I'd keep my pack of hounds—
Squire Homespun ! Lord how fine it sounds !
Have it, said Susan, as you will ;
But sure My Lord ! sounds finer still ;

Then I should be My Lady : Bless me,
How smart ! how beautiful I'd dress me !
Such bonnets, mantles, ruffs, and puffs,
Such gowns, and furbelows, and muffs,
With chains and ear-rings, watch and broche,
And Madam Homespun in her coach :
So grand ! so stately ! who but me ?
How mad my neighbour Barnes will be !
Peace, said the husband, pr'ythee, peace !
'Tis time this idle talk should cease :

Consider what we have at stake!

I fain some friend's advice would take :

At least we must be wise and wary,

As we were counsell'd by the fairy.

So hasten, dame, and fill the beaker,

And we'll discuss it o'er our liquor.

'Tis vain to trace each various plan

Which Susan form'd with her good man.

Or yet how oft they drain'd the cup,

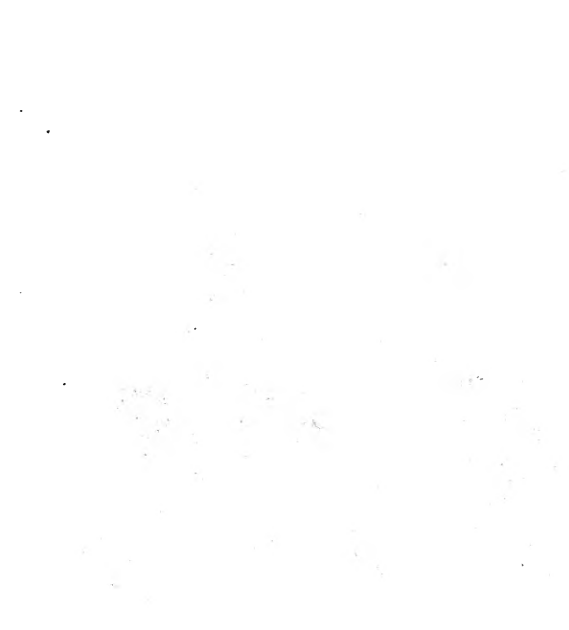
Ere the long conference broke up :

But as opinions were divided,
The business still was undecided.
In this dilemma the result
Was—that their pillows they'd consult.
'Tis best to take more time to con it,
Quoth Homespun—so we'll sleep upon it :
Our choice requires the coolest head ;
So rake the fire, and we'll to bed.
Susan, the happiest wife on earth,
Set all to rights, and brush'd her hearth ;

And said, These embers burn so clear,
I WISH WE HAD A PUDDING HERE !
Methinks 'twould broil so 'clean and nice ;
I'd make it ready in a trice ;
She spoke—and in the chimney rumbled
A noise—and down a pudding tumbled !

The affrighted Susan stood amaz'd,
With tearful eyes, and hands uprais'd,
O'erwhelm'd with grief and self-reproach,
Farewell ! to Madam in her coach !





Her tongue itself forgot its use,—

Tongue once so ready at excuse !

Mean time the husband storm'd and rated,

Swearing no man was e'er so mated ;

And call'd his spouse—like savage shameless,

By ugly words that must be nameless.

To throw our fortune thus away !

Are'nt you a stupid idiot—hey ?

Such want of thought your folly shows,

I WISH THE PUDDING ON YOUR NOSE !

The words escap'd, he gain'd his wish.

The pudding, rising from its dish,

On Goody Homespan's nose was stuck

So fast, no power on earth could pluck

The sad incumbrance away.

What could be done ? Oh, hapless day !

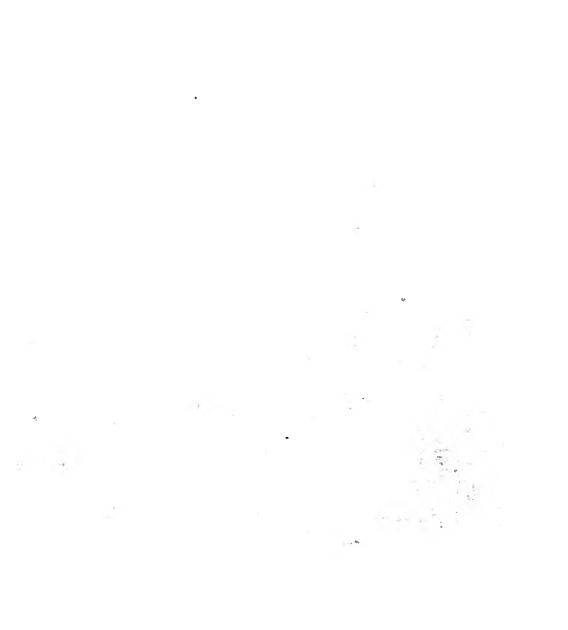
She cried, she stamp'd, she tore her hair ;

The fatal pudding still hung there.

Oh ! I shall die, said she, with shame !

Now, Master—who is most to blame ?





My face again I ne'er can show,

I shall be hooted as I go—

What will the neighbours say—Oh ! oh !

The sorrowing husband now repented ;

And Susan in her turn resented :

While he, with looks most melancholy,

Confess'd he'd equall'd her in folly ;

Yet strove his weeping spouse to cheer :

Don't be cast down, said he, my dear !

Consider ! we have one stake more.

We'll wish of wealth an endless store,

And you shall have such gay rich clothes,

That folks won't think about your nose :

Nay, it will ornament your face,

When cover'd with a golden case :

Therefore, my dearest, calm your passion !

We'll say nose-jewels are the fashion.

Sad Susan wav'd her head in woe,

The pudding too wav'd to and fro,

While she exclaim'd, I tell you, No,

You barbarous man ! you talk in vain :

I'll never shew my face again :

I'll have no case of gold, not I ;

But lay me down at once, and die !

Nay, said her mate—it shan't be so—

I'd sooner our last hope forego.

Our third wish will your peace restore,

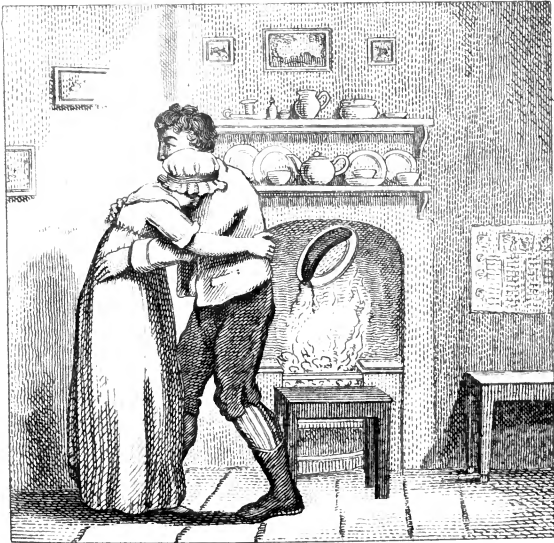
We are but where we were before.

I will my luckless wish revoke,

Recall the words I rashly spoke,

And to relieve you from this evil,
I WISH THE PUDDING AT THE DEVIL !

Obedient to this prudent wish,
The pudding fell, and in its dish
Flew up the chimney as it came,
And thus restor'd the suffering dame ;
Who, freed from anguish, now could show
Her own dear nose—*in statu quo* :
Yet scarce recovered, laugh'd and cried,
'Twixt joy—and disappointed pride.





Quoth Homespun—To my mind, my dame,
A tricking fairy is that same !
Why did she meddle thus about us ?
To tempt us first, and then to flout us ?—
But let us not complain, my Sue ;
The fairy to her word was true,
And if our schemes are overthrown,
In faith, the fault is all our own.
A wholesome lesson she has taught,
Though it is somewhat dearly bought,

And should she call another day,
She'll find it is not thrown away—
For as we have regained our senses,
We'll lay aside our vain pretences,
Temper our hopes with moderation,
AND SUIT OUR WISHES TO OUR STATION.

THE END.

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